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BOOKS

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Tails Wagging Dogs

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THE U-2 AFFAIR, by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, Random House, \$1.95.

THE CUBAN INVASION, by Tad Szulc and Karl E. Meyer, Ballantine, \$0.50.

These books, each by a brace of Washington newspapermen, recount the stories of the most painful episodes in American foreign policy in each of the past two years. They offer one more opportunity to think about the lessons to be learned from these springtime fiascoes. In the U-2 affair of 1960 and even more in the Cuban invasion of 1961, there certainly was ineptitude, as these detailed reconstructions show; the question is whether there was also a deeper failure.

The Szulc-Meyer book on Cuba, which is the more loosely put together but also the more intellectually interesting, sets its story against a broad background of U.S.-Cuban relations, and makes interpretive and editorial comments all through the telling of it. No doubt there will be many differing versions about as controversial and complicated a set of events as this. This one finds the roots of the disaster going much deeper than speculations about the invasion itself; the cause, among many errors, made, too easily an analogy between this attempt and the earlier

Guatemala success; the Eisenhower administration had too friendly a relationship with the Batista regime; the United States responded clumsily to the Castro revolution and overreacted to the mass trials; the American people had had a "Platt Amendment" psychology for many years, regarding a country we dominated economically as being somehow rightly subject to our intervention. As is regularly the case, the faults in our approach toward Cuba are to be found as much in broad patterns of interpretation over many years as in specific decisions in one moment.

The Wise-Brown book on the U-2 story is more carefully written but perhaps makes too transparent a use of fictional and dramatic devices to tell the historical events. The narrative weaves back and forth among places and characters (with a great deal about Captain Powers's life and family and trial and eventual release in the trade for Colonel Abel), in the way the Tarzan books used to do; the book is full of specific place names and dialogue and thoughts and exact times to the minute ("at 12:05 p.m. Hagerty called in newsmen . . . at 6:18 p.m. Ivano dashed out of the Press Club . . . at

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